Resolving Hiatus by Diphthongisation in Romanian
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1. The data. Among Romance languages, Romanian displays a diphthong / hiatus contrast (Chitoran & Hualde 2007). When hiatus is avoided in continuous speech, the main repair strategies employed by native speakers are: (1) glide formation (/kopilərje/ - [kopilərje] ‘childhood’); (2) diphthongisation (/rələɪz/ - [rələɪz] ‘you realize’, /de#atunč/ - [dəatunč] ‘since then’); (3) vowel elision (/fruktuos/ - [fruktuos] ‘fruitful’, /skrɨs#in/ - [skrɨsen] ‘written in’) (Niculescu 2014). In this article, I focus on avoidance strategy (2), both for internal and external hiatus.

The goal of this study is to provide an up-to-date descriptive analysis of internal and external hiatus in Romanian at the interface between phonetics and phonology.

2. Analysis. First, I establish an inventory of internal hiatus and diphthongs occurrences in Romanian based on DOOM² (Niculescu 2012). I classify these sequences according to the position in the word and proximity to stress, vowel height, and frequency in the list (/i.e/ is first in terms of frequency, with over 5000 entries). I establish a frequency hierarchy of hiatus according to V1-V2 combinations. Second, I compare the dictionary norm to the spoken language. To accomplish this, I investigate inter- and intra-speaker variation in the case of V-V sequence diphthongisation through a production task. Data are collected from 10 informants (5 females), and the analysis is carried out in PRAAT. Candidates are required to talk about last summer (activities, plans etc.). The data is then transcribed, and each sequence consisting of hiatus resolution by diphthongisation is analysed. A qualitative acoustic analysis will be provided for all participants.

The main objectives of this study are: (1) to identify the structures that undergo diphthongisation; (2) to account for the factors that facilitate this repair strategy; (3) to sort out the sequences that allow for more than one avoidance mechanism (besides diphthongisation) and explain this situation ([zja,rul] ‘the newspaper’, [so,fj,ja] ‘Sofia’ vs. [deakolo] ‘from there’ [pakolo] ‘around there’).

I hypothesize that predominant sequences for internal hiatus (/i.e/) become peripheral for external hiatus (/e.a/ is more common), and vice versa, also that external hiatus attracts more repair mechanisms for the same V-V sequence than internal hiatus, and that proximity to stress is a relevant factor for internal hiatus only. In the final part of the study, I compare these two classes of vocalic structures in terms of a norm vs. usage relation (for internal hiatus, I correlate the data gathered from DOOM² with the one obtained from the 10 informants), in terms of frequency (based on the production experiment, I establish and examine the hierarchies for each type of hiatus), and in terms of tendency toward diphthongisation (I identify those vocalic pairs that are more prone to diphthongise, focusing on their distribution in the two categories of hiatus).

Such careful comparison of normative vs. continuous speech is important for understanding a typology of hiatus resolution in Romance languages.

Keywords: hiatus resolution, diphthongisation, Romanian
SELECTED REFERENCES


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